

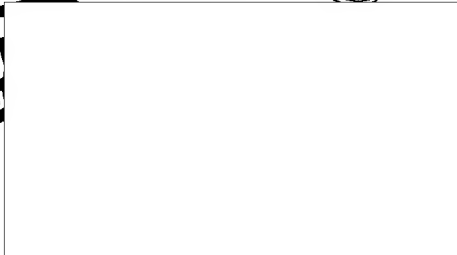


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Afghanistan Situation Report



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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

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CONDITIONS IN THE PANJSHER

[redacted] the situation
there is better than previously reported in Western press
accounts. [redacted]

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PERSPECTIVE

AFGHANISTAN IN NOVEMBER

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Soviet and Afghan military forces conducted no major offensives in Afghanistan during November except for an operation near Herat and continuing efforts to relieve outposts in Paktia Province. The insurgents staged some of the war's most intensive rocket attacks on Kabul, and the guerrillas' increasingly effective use of SA-7s has prompted new evasive maneuvers for aircraft using Kabul International Airport. Although winter weather is likely to constrain large-scale operations for the next few months, both sides will use the time to prepare for the spring campaigns. [redacted]

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This document is prepared weekly by the Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis and the Office of Soviet Analysis. Questions or comments on the issues raised in the publication should be directed to [redacted]

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CONDITIONS IN THE PANJSHER

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] the situation there is better for the insurgents than reported in Western press accounts. Buildings have suffered only superficial damage from ground fire and bombing, the agricultural infrastructure is intact, and civilian support for Panjsheri commander Masood is undiminished. Insurgent morale also remains high. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] units comprising at least 200 guerrillas surround the largest Soviet and Afghan garrisons in the valley. Masood claims that the Soviets will withdraw their forces from the valley if insurgent pressure intensifies during the winter. [REDACTED]

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Comment:

[REDACTED] results of the Soviets' most recent offensives into the Panjshir have been mixed. Masood's forces apparently have been successful in harassing Soviet and Afghan troops and in inflicting some casualties. Nonetheless, we see no signs that the Soviets are currently preparing to pull large numbers of forces out of the valley. [REDACTED]

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PERSPECTIVE**AFGHANISTAN IN NOVEMBER**

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The Soviets and Afghan Army mounted no major offensives in Afghanistan during November, except for an operation in late November in the Herat area and continuing efforts to relieve insurgent pressure on regime outposts in Paktia Province. Insurgent rocket attacks in Kabul were some of the fiercest of the war, and the SA-7 threat to aircraft using Kabul International Airport caused the Soviets to implement new evasive maneuvers for takeoffs and landings. No major fighting is likely in the coming months, but the Soviets may try to prevent the insurgents from replenishing arms, ammunition, and supplies by attacking resistance supply lines in Afghanistan and along the Pakistani and Iranian borders.

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Kabul Security

The US Embassy reported frequent rocket attacks on Kabul--most of which caused little damage and few casualties--including a barrage on 25 November that was called the most intensive since the Soviet invasion. The Soviets have tightened security in Kabul, and the Embassy reported rumors that the Soviets plan to depopulate villages in the Shewaki area from where most of the rocket attacks are launched.

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The Soviets are increasingly concerned about the safety of aircraft using Kabul International Airport. According to the US Embassy, there was a significant drop in the number of takeoffs and landings at Kabul in early November following the SA-7 shootdown of a Soviet military transport on 27 October. about a dozen helicopters had been shot down near the airport between mid-October and mid-November.

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The US Embassy in Kabul reported that all aircraft using the airport now are flying evasive maneuvers on takeoffs and landings to avoid insurgent antiaircraft missiles. The takeoffs and landings include sharp banking turns and steep ascents and descents over the city to avoid low-altitude flights over the hills around Kabul, from which the

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insurgents have fired at aircraft. Military aircraft using the airport at Kabul also use flares to deflect heat-seeking missiles, and the Embassy reported that Soviet artillery around the airport frequently fire into the hills to suppress insurgent antiaircraft positions. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Afghan insurgents assassinated a high-ranking Interior Ministry official in Kabul. A Deputy Minister of the Interior escaped assassination by fleeing into a neighbor's yard. [REDACTED]

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Panjsher Valley Developments

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Sources of the US Embassy indicate that the Soviets have blocked some of Masood's key supply lines into the Panjsher Valley. According to the Embassy, the destruction of crops in the Panjsher by Soviet and Afghan forces has left Masood's guerrillas dependent on outside supplies for food. Masood is increasingly concerned that snow-blocked mountain passes and Soviet efforts to interdict passable trails into the valley will exacerbate food shortages for the Panjsher resistance. [REDACTED]

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The Border Region

The Afghan insurgents continued to maintain pressure on regime border outposts in Konar and Paktia Provinces in November, [REDACTED] and Soviet and Afghan forces were active in both provinces trying to relieve the outposts and to cut insurgent infiltration routes from Pakistan. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] there were few incidents along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in November. [REDACTED]

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Outlook

Winter weather will constrain major military activities by both sides for the next three months. The insurgents probably will be better able to take the initiative in attacking Soviet and regime supply lines and outposts than the Soviets and Afghan Army, whose operations are more limited by bad weather--particularly in attacks against insurgent positions in the mountains. The winter months may also see an intensification of insurgent attacks in the cities, especially in Kabul. The Soviets probably will tighten security in the capital in anticipation that the resistance will try to stage a dramatic incident to mark the fifth anniversary of the Soviet invasion in December. [REDACTED]

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aggressive Soviet efforts to interdict insurgent supply lines could make resistance resupply more difficult in early spring and lead to more cross-border attacks into Pakistan. Although major Soviet operations against insurgent strongholds--such as in the Panjsher Valley--are not

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likely during the winter unless the weather is unusually good, the Soviets may attempt to mount small-scale raids against some known resistance positions.

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